



## Definition of a Quality Preschool Experience

### **A quality preschool program includes the following components for children and their families:**

1. A safe and engaging environment that prepares children for Kindergarten
2. Teachers whose professional background prepares them to show warmth, form supportive relationships with children, model enthusiasm, and show regard for students' voices
3. Teachers who have learned through their professional preparation the best ways to maintain order in the class and help students regulate their own behavior
4. Rigorously educated teachers who set goals to help children become productive, responsible, curious and active learners by modeling advanced language and teaching them ways of thinking in literacy, math, and science
5. A focus on helping every child to learn, develop, and gradually do things independently
6. Daily opportunities for communication between parents and teachers
7. Expectations for professional growth and development of teaching staff

### **What should you see in a high-quality preschool environment?**

Children should have the space to move around freely and safely, with natural light and ventilation available. A variety of learning centers should be on hand to let children explore on their own. A space for privacy and space for outdoor play and exercise should be offered. A sufficient number of staff should be present to meet the needs of the children in attendance and provide visual observation and supervision at all times. High-quality preschools should have the following types of materials:

- Gross motor equipment such as tricycles, balls, and climbing structures
- Accessible child-sized toilets, sinks, chairs and tables
- Soft furnishings and soft toys
- Materials and displays at children's eye-level
- A wide selection of books and language materials
- Art materials such as clay, paint, crayons, play dough, and paper

- Musical instruments
- Materials that encourage imaginative play, literacy, and numeracy, such as blocks
- Props for dramatic play
- Science materials such as collections of natural objects and living things to care for and observe
- Materials for counting and measurement (such as scales, rulers, and small objects to count)

**The environment should be clean and maintained, including the following features:**

- Daily cleaning of all surfaces (not just vacuuming)
- Immediate resolution of facility issues (burnt-out light bulbs, backed-up toilets, lack of toilet paper, soap, or paper towels)
- Replacement of dirty or broken toys and furniture
- Age-appropriate toys and furniture in each classroom

**How should teachers and other staff interact and work with the children and other staff?**

Teachers and the children in their care should have warm and supportive relationships with one another, and teachers should show care and respect in the way they treat each other.

Children should be greeted in ways that help them become involved with activities, and should be kept busy throughout the day. Children should be allowed to nap as necessary, fed when hungry, and taught to take care of their own health through such things as proper hand-washing. The teacher pays attention to which students need assistance and attends to their needs and makes sure that the students are learning to do things for themselves. Children have opportunities to talk and express themselves, including being free to move around during activities.

- Students understand what behaviors are appropriate in their classroom, and the teacher maintains order by focusing on positive and subtle reminders. You should see few, if any, students misbehaving.
- The transition from one activity to the next is smooth and does not take too much time. The teacher is prepared with activities and lessons and manages time efficiently.
- The teacher encourages the children to participate in activities, using different ways of engaging their learning through a range of strategies, such as visual, auditory, and movement. The teacher keeps their attention on the learning goals.

- The teacher encourages the children how to think critically through discussions that invite them to explain how they solved a problem, came to a conclusion, created a product, etc. The teacher provides the children with opportunities to be creative and to connect concepts to one another and to their backgrounds.
- The teacher breaks down tasks for children, and tailors instruction to make sure every child understands.
- The teacher provides feedback to the children that celebrates their progress and assists them in understanding how they accomplish their goals.
- The teacher affirms the efforts of the children which encourage them to persist and participate.
- Conversations frequently take place among the children and between the teacher and the children -- with the teacher asking open-ended questions, repeating and extending the child's responses and modeling advanced language.
- Children with special needs are integrated into the activities with all children, and working closely with the parents, the children's needs are addressed by staff.
- Children's home language and culture is represented in the classroom and family-school partnerships promote the continued development of the home language.

### **How should teachers and other staff be treated?**

The quality of the preschool experience for children and their families is influenced by the way teachers and staff are supported. Teachers and other staff should have access to the following resources:

- A separate bathroom and lounge area,
- Time to plan for children's activities regularly,
- Support for attending courses and other training,
- A professional library with materials on childhood subjects,
- A well-equipped office and meeting spaces,
- Regular, useful, and supportive feedback about their performance by supervisors based on observation,
- Time off for illness and emergencies
- Expectations for professional growth and development
- Time for educational and professional development opportunities

## How should parents be engaged?

- Parents should be given information about the program (e.g., fees, rules, program's philosophy ways the program works with children, parent handbook) prior to child enrollment,
- Parents should regularly receive information about their children's progress through informal conversations with staff, formal parent conferences, newsletters, and brochures,
- Parents should be referred to professional services as necessary (e.g., special parenting help, medical support, Regional Center), should be offered a variety of ways to be involved in their child's learning, such as eating lunch with their child, assisting with activities, or being part of the parent board,
- Parents should be given the opportunity to become involved in classroom activities (story time, share family traditions, assist with class preparation or activities, etc.).

LAUP's definition of a quality preschool experience is based in large part on the tools we use to assess preschool quality – the Classroom Assessment Scoring System and the Environmental Rating Scales. For more information go to [laup.net](http://laup.net) or contact us at (213) 416-1200.